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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**Research Alliance plans \$1.4M in 2009 grants**By Susan A. Baird
PBN Web Editor

PROVIDENCE – The R.I. Science and Technology Advisory Council (STAC) today announced plans to invest another \$1.4 million, through its R.I. Research Alliance and Collaborative Research Award Program, to encourage research collaborations among the state's academic and commercial institutions.

That is down from the \$1.5 million in Research Alliance grants STAC was able to last year. ([READ MORE](#)) But the program's "continued support from state leadership," despite Rhode Island's current budget crunch, "demonstrates that Rhode Island is committed to making strategic investments into its R&D platform and significant improvements to our innovation infrastructure," STAC co-chair Jeff Seemann, dean of the University of Rhode Island's College of the Environment and Life Sciences, said in a statement today.

"THE CONTINUED SUPPORT from state leadership," despite Rhode Island's current budget crunch, "demonstrates that Rhode Island is committed to making strategic investments into its R&D platform and significant improvements to our innovation infrastructure," STAC co-chair Jeff Seemann, dean of the URI College of the Environment and Life Sciences.

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Since its inception in 2006, the Research Alliance has received nearly 100 proposals from researchers at colleges and universities, hospitals, government agencies and private companies across Rhode Island, the council said.

It has awarded funding to 17 teams from 24 public and private institutions, for projects in biology, chemistry, engineering, environmental science, oceanography and medicine. Projects have included the development of high-tech toys to aid disabled children ([READ MORE](#)); the use of virtual reality to improve the design of prosthetic limbs ([READ MORE](#)); and the development of marine-based drugs to fight a common and deadly hospital infection ([READ MORE](#)).

"Inter-institutional collaboration is increasingly critical to receiving federal funding awards," said STAC co-chair Clyde Briant, vice president for research at Brown University. "STAC and the Research Alliance have made great progress in supporting research, encouraging collaboration and increasing our competitiveness for funding."

For instance, one of the teams that received Research Alliance funding in 2007 has received a \$1.4 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to continue its research into testicular cancer, while another team focusing on treatments for multiple-antibiotic-resistant infections (MARIs) has received \$200,000 from private foundations, the council said.

The grants also may be used to acquire state-of-the-art instrumentation to support a team's research. "By providing this type of infrastructure funding, STAC also assists Rhode Island researchers meet federally-mandated requirements for matching funds at the state level ... bringing new resources into the state and strengthening Rhode Island's role as a hub for biomedical research," the council said.

"It's a good example of how a relatively small amount of funding can have a dramatic impact," said Wolfgang Peti, a researcher at Brown's NSF/EPSCoR Proteomics Facility, which has used Research Alliance funds to help purchase a

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The next round of Research Alliance grants will be announced in January, STAC said. To apply, researchers must submit a preliminary proposal by Oct. 23 and a full proposal by Nov. 6.

Winners are selected via "a competitive granting process similar to that used by the National Science Foundation," STAC said. The awards will continue to support "catalytic" research that "represents discoveries likely to deliver value to Rhode Island's citizens; has strong technology development and/or commercialization potential; and is well-positioned to attract follow-on funding from federal agencies, corporations and/or foundations," the council added.

Besides the Collaborative Research grants, the Research Alliance, "using catalytic investments from Brown and the University of Rhode Island to launch a new phase of activity and growth ... has constructed a collaborative-research Web portal that catalogues Rhode Island's research assets and brings more visibility to research happening across the state," STAC said.

"Building a strong and sustainable Research Alliance is vitally important to our state's economy and central to our plan for growing more high wage jobs for Rhode Islanders," said council member Saul Kaplan, executive director of the R.I. Economic Development Corporation.

The R.I. Science and Technology Advisory Council (STAC) – winner of a [2008 Innovation Award](#) from Providence Business news and the R.I. Economic Development Corporation – was created in 2005 to help turn Rhode Island into a regional hub for the life sciences, information technology and other research-based industries. Its R.I. Research Alliance and Collaborative Research Award Program, launched in 2006, aims to encourage collaboration in the state's research and development community. For more information, or to apply for Research Alliance funding, contact Christine Smith at csmith@riedc.com or visit www.stac.ri.gov.

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